

ND column

edited by JOHN STEVENS



Access station to turn microphone on itself

Radio 3ZZ, the ABC's new community access station which opened last night, is about to run into a situation worthy of Monty Python.

The idea of access radio is that anybody can have a say about anything. In that spirit 3ZZ on May 30 will broadcast a full-scale attack on ITSELF.

Everything possible is being done to make the programme a success.

ABC staff are combing their own archives for damaging information. The chairman himself, Professor Downing, has agreed to be interviewed.

Mr. David Griffiths of the Alternative Radio Association is out to prove that the ABC is not the body to run a community access station.

But Mr. Griffiths is in a curious position. The more convincing his attack the more he disproves his own argument.

"That," said Mr. Griffiths, a 30-year-old welfare researcher, "is called co-option, a well-known bureaucratic technique by which an organisation allows its critics so much latitude they are discredited."

"A lot of it happens with the Labor Government. Critics are co-opted to advisory committees and are compromised. It is hard not to be co-opted."

Mr. Griffiths asserts that the ABC does not want to run an access radio but would rather use its third Melbourne station for something like 2JJ, the rock station started in competition with commercial radio which is turning Sydney airwaves blue.

He points to the April report of the Senate Committee on Education, Science and the Arts which states that the ABC had not sought any role in a public access station but was invited by the Government to undertake the task.

The committee concluded that the ABC was not the appropriate authority to control public broadcasting.

Mr. Griffiths says the ABC is being half-hearted about access radio and would be glad to see it fail.

Staff and budget would not be adequate to help inarticulate and



publicity-shy dissenters to make programmes. The system would encourage only the elitist groups who already had the money and resources to advance their views.

He would like to see a Government-subsidised access radio run by a new independent authority.

The present staff were young and enthusiastic, he said, but, as ABC employees, ultimately loyal to the ABC.

ND spoke to two staff members and also found them enthusiastic but rather guided by an attitude of "suck it and see".

The man in charge, the co-ordinator, Mr. Richard Zoeller, 32, said he had had no real brief from the ABC as to the station's role, but he saw it as an experiment in co-operation between the community and a big bureaucratic organisation.

Its need was a symptom of an urban technocratic society whose people felt deprived of a role to play in determining their own destiny.

Would the station last? Mr. Zoeller thinks its very success could easily eliminate its usefulness in a few years.

As to who should run it, you may think the question esoteric but if you do feel strongly you can now say so.

On air.